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# TANK ANGLING IN INDIA



BHATTACHARYA







**HINTS TO AMATEURS**

**ON**

**TANK ANGLING IN**

**INDIA**

**BY**

**P. N. BHATTACHARYYA**

**CALCUTTA**  
**THACKER, SPINK & CO**  
**1915**

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*Charles G. Lister*  
*1844 of*  
*Longfellow*

TO

DR. W. C. HOSSACK, M.D., D.P.H.,

AN ALL-ROUND SPORTSMAN,

AS A TOKEN OF

AUTHOR'S BEST REGARDS.

## PREFACE.

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As Mr. Thomas's valuable book on Tank Angling (though not exhaustive), the only work on the subject, is out-of-print, I have been often asked by my friends to write a book on the subject.

I originally wrote this little work about three years ago, and had an idea of bringing it out with the aid of Dr. A. R. Duckworth, I.S.M.D. Unfortunately the first manuscript was lost through him, and I had to write the whole thing out again myself.

I must take this opportunity of thanking my friend Mr. Thomas David, who is also a keen angler, for kindly revising the manuscript and encouraging me to bring out a book of this nature.

Any question on Tank Angling I shall very gladly answer, and I may undertake to supply angling outfit, if anyone would desire to purchase through me.

P. N. BHATTACHARYYA.

15/1, STRAND ROAD, }  
CALCUTTA ; }  
*The 23rd May, 1915.* }



## FOREWORD.

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IT has been correctly observed that "angling "is the quietest of all pursuits out-of-doors ; it "requires patience, perseverance, etc." It has also been said of the rod and line "a fish at one end and a fool at the other." Though this latter is not far from the truth at times, yet it may be assured that it is quite within the possibilities of the average man to give the lie to this statement at the end of the day's honest efforts. Taking for granted that the tank selected contains a fair number of fish and has not been over-fished, an average sportsman should invariably be satisfied with his day's catch, if the climatic and other conditions are not too unfavourable. With a view to help amateurs in these directions, especially our Anglo-Indian brethren, this book is intended as a sort of practical guide. The information given may not be altogether new to an Indian adept, still the work in itself may boast that it is as exhaustive as possible inasmuch as it deals in almost all the methods known throughout Bengal. Some of them may be of help even

to adepts in the art, who stick to local methods only. For instance, the *arah* and *jhima* fishing are not known to people outside a limited area around Calcutta. Yet they are, I should unhesitatingly say, two of the best methods, which the angler may with advantage pursue, but of course according to individual tastes.

From the table of expenses of the outfit laid down in some books by European gentlemen, one would naturally be shy of spending his money in this pursuit. Our outfit is by no means inferior though humble, and yet with it myself and my friends have more often bagged monsters weighing from 40 to 60 pounds than it has been the lot of the average Anglo-Indian angler to secure.

Where rates of articles have been quoted in this work they may be taken as the average price, and fluctuation in value is very little if any at any time.

Whatever I may say in this little work may be accepted as authoritative as I have fished from my infancy, so to say, for the last thirty years, in almost all parts of Bengal and Behar, where I have been circumstanced to stay or gone for a holiday or otherwise. I had an opportunity of fishing even in the sacred tank of Puri.

I do not wish to augment the size of this little practical work with long-drawn yarns and stories of my adventure or catches, which, although they might be interesting, would only increase the cost of production.

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# HINTS TO AMATEURS

ON

## TANK ANGLING IN INDIA.

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### THE OUTFIT.

#### ROD.

JOINTED rods, though very convenient to carry from one place to another, are in practice hardly as reliable as the one-piece bamboo ring-all rod. I know of a certain firm who made bamboo rods with one joint only, but unfortunately this too proved to be of very little advantage. As in tank angling the strikes are often sharp, the jointed portions give way very soon.

Of the bamboo type though the female bamboo rods (*Talda*) are finer in appearance and lighter in weight, I prefer those of the *Jawa* (a compromise between the male and female variety) as they are more tenacious, elastic and give a better

spring. A selected bamboo rod should not cost more than a rupee. Any number of them can be had in Chandni Bazar, Calcutta, or any fishing outfit suppliers should be able to furnish them. The butt-end of the rod should not be thicker than  $1\frac{1}{4}$ " and the tip not finer or thicker than  $\frac{1}{8}$ th of an inch. Any portion finer than this should be cut off near a natural joint. The butt-end should be sawn off close to a joint. The rod should neither be too stiff nor too pliant and should be examined for pliancy and balance. With too stiff a rod one would stand more chance of breaking the line and if it is fine and much too pliant, one cannot put sufficient strain upon the fish when in play. The entire length of the rod should be 10 to 11 feet and perfectly straight and gradiently tapering. A rod at the end of the season or when not in use, should be kept in the kitchen soaked with mustard oil, to guard against borers. It may also be dewed during the night. It should better be kept suspended against the wall from a hook like a billiard cue, to keep it straight. When kept parallel to the ground it should be kept on at least 4 supports at equal distances. Frequent and regular application of mustard oil improves the appearance of the rod as well as its enduring quality. This is preferred to varnishing.

## REEL.

3 " to 3½ " sized reels should do for average tanks. Revolving plate brass reels are generally to be preferred. Country-made reels being more substantially made, prove more lasting. In fact any good reel, well made, answers the purpose. Though gun-metal or german-silver reels are unquestionably more lasting, I prefer aluminium reels with gun-metal bushes as they are lighter and at the same time equally serviceable. Check-reels or multipliers are of no use in tank angling. Of cheap reels "Murcott's" are fairly useful. They can be had at about Re. 1-4 an inch. Of country-made reels those manufactured by G. C. Dass, S. Roy or D. N. Biswas or Khan & Co. are preferable to most others. Luscombe's antifoul are about the best but they are expensive.

## THE LINE.

Though some people recommend "Empire city American Bass line moderately fine," scarcely any Indian will use it. *Muga* lines are by far the best. They are cheap, elastic and lasting. A *muga* line, taken proper care of, should last for two or three seasons over. Twisted lines are by far superior to plaited lines. A moderately fine line may be recommended, as finer lines scare away a fish less than

the thicker line. The line for some yards should be tested every day before fishing, for they are very often damaged by insects and flies. Damaged and worn portions of line should be cut off. The line should be aired after the day's fishing. The real *muga* lines have a fine golden colour. Other silk lines are not equally lasting.

A new plaited *muga* line should be treated for kinking before use. For this a weight is fixed at one end of the line which is kept hanging freely from a height. This removes kinking. Entirely hand-made lines cost about Rs. 2 a tola by weight, whereas the machine-made *muga* line can be had at from Re. 1 to Re. 1-4 a tola. They are procurable from the Chandni Bazar or from Khan & Co., S. Roy, or D. N. Biswas, or from any other fishing outfit suppliers. Some anglers are in the habit of waterproofing the line by rubbing "Gab" or "Bakul" fruit, but it is doubtful whether they obtain the desired effect. On the other hand this treatment makes the line black, which I believe renders the line rather prominent in a clear-water tank.

#### RECIPE FOR WATERPROOFING LINE.

Soap	...	...	2 Ounces
Glue	...	...	4 "
Water	...	...	1 Gallon.

Soften the glue in cold water and dissolve it together with the soap in the water by aid of heat and agitation. Boil the line in the liquid for several hours, the time required depends on the fibre and thickness of the line. After it is saturated wring out the excess of liquid and expose the line to the air until nearly dry; then digest the line for from 5 to 12 hours in the following solution:—

Alum	...	...	13 Ounces.
Salt	...	...	15    "
Water	...	...	1 Gallon.

Finally wring it out, rinse in clear water and dry at a temperature about 80° F. Mr. C. T. Dolby a member of the fishing club, states: "I have used this for several years on my tusser lines and have found it to act very well."

Another good recipe for waterproofing is as follows:—Mix Copal Varnish and Gold size in the proportion of 10 parts Copal Varnish to 1 part Gold size. Soak the line in this for 3 or 4 days. Dry the line; it will take a fortnight or 3 weeks to dry.—*Angler's Handbook*.

A reel should only be about  $\frac{3}{4}$  full of line, otherwise at the time of playing the fish when winding the line, it may not unlikely be wound at one place in the centre and interfere with the revolving of the reel.

## HOOKS.

Luscombe recommends his own make "Short sproat or Limeric bend *Rohu* hooks, on double gut tied straight with one grain of perforated shot working loose on separate link of line, 4 to 6 inches from the hook. I use three sizes of hooks according to size of fish expected. For *Calbose* and small fish Hutchison's No. 7, for medium sized fish do. No. 10 and for large do. No. 12. The No. 10 hook is the best general hook for this work." I do not understand why an angler of Mr. Luscombe's experience classes *Calbose* with the small fish. Possibly he has not caught any big *Calbose*. I have seen a *Calbose* about 20 pounds. True it is that they take a very long time to grow in size, so what one generally finds is from a pound to about 4 pounds. But I must confess that a 10 lbs. *Calbose* would give one as much play as *Rohu* of double the size. For *Calbose* I cannot recommend a small hook of No. 7 size. I would at least No. 9 size. The No. 7 size I should think is only suitable for *Bata* (Hindi "*Rewa*"). No. 9 is the smallest size hook I should use for a "Carp." No. 12 should be my general size for "labeos" above 10lbs. and it is of little consequence whether you bag smaller ones than at 8 to 10 pounder. Good hooks are

also stocked by Messrs. Khan & Co., S. Roy and D. N. Biswas and others of Calcutta, cost not exceeding /3/ to /5/ a pair. Amongst my other hooks I always carry 2 or 3 pairs of *Kutla* hooks of the following shape. As the *Kutlas* very seldom take bait, it is easier to hook them on the body, i.e., foul hook them. The method will be explained later. One should have with one, hooks of different sizes and should select which to use according to the size of the fish the tank generally contains. An idea of the general size of fish in the tank can be obtained by local enquiry. Many onlookers, however, will give information regarding the size, but as their imagination, as a rule, exceeds the ordinary, it is safe to accept their statement with some allowance. It is always better to purchase mounted hooks, if one does not know how to mount hooks properly.

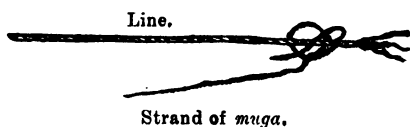


*Kutla* hook.

### MOUNTING HOOKS.

To mount a hook cut a piece of fishing line about 10 inches long, and at its two ends whip two hooks with pieces of *muga* yarn. If *muga* yarn is not available you may unwind a piece of line

and with a strand of same can very well whip the hook up to half the length of its shank. Before whipping, first unravel about  $\frac{1}{2}$  inch of the line at each end. Just where the unravelling ends, bind the line with the *muga* yarn with a loop as shown in



the illustration. Now bring the smaller end of the line with which you are whipping, the line and the hook together, and whip the hook with the longer end beginning from the knob end of the hook.

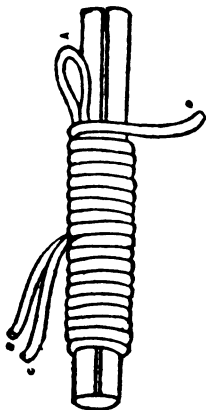
### WHIPPING A HOOK.

When only 10 to 12 more turns in the whipping remain to be finished, take a small piece of silk about 6 inches long and lay it along the shank of the hook. First having doubled it so that the loop end is directing towards the end towards which you are whipping, go on taking the turns as before for the remaining 10 or 12 times but

*including this loop in the whipping.*

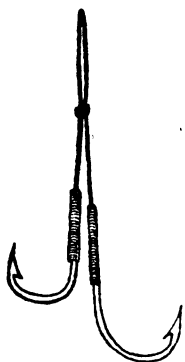


“ The whipping at this stage will have the appearance as given in the following diagram. Having done this pass the end of silk you are whipping with, *viz.*, D, through the loop marked A in the figure and pull it taut. Then take between the finger and thumb the two ends of the small piece forming the loop, and which are marked B & C, and pull these until the end of the loop, along with which is drawn the original piece of silk with which the whipping was being carried out, is pulled in as it were under the last 10 or 12



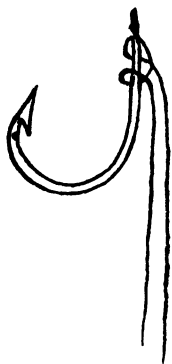
turns of the whipping. The three ends which will at this point be found to protrude from the whipping are now cut off as close as possible and whipping varnished over, or the piece A, B, C, may be pulled right through and out, drawing the piece D with it. If a whipping is finished off in this manner, it will, under ordinary circumstances, last for years.”—*Angler's Handbook*.

When the hooks have been whipped at each end of the line double the line so that one hook is above the other, the end of lower one being near the bend of the other. Now tie the doubled line with a knot leaving a smaller loop on the top and the hooks freely hanging.



The easier method of mounting a hook is to take two pieces of *muga* line 9 to 11 inches long. At the middle of a piece of this line bind the end of a

hook with a loop knot (as shown), and then twist the two portions of the line together like a rope. Only knobbed hooks can be mounted thus. Do the same with the other hook and the other piece of line, then bind the two free ends of the two twisted lines mounted with the hooks with a knot tightly. Then double the entire length so that one hook is above the other and then bind with a knot as before.



Where there are *Kutlas* in the tank I use three hooks. The lowest being a *Kutla* Killer. Some people are fond of using 4 hooks at a time, two *Rohu* hooks and two *Kutla* hooks, *i.e.*, they fix two separate pairs on the line, at one and the same time, but I don't consider the arrangement to be of much advantage.

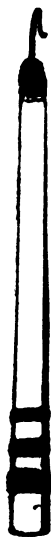
The mounted hooks should be fixed with the doubled end of the line bound with a knot, as shown in the illustration, so that they may be changed at pleasure.



### FLOAT.

A piece of quill from the peacock's feather cut into about 5 to 6 inches size makes an excellent float; the harl is first removed by snipping neatly. This is somehow or other fixed with the line. Some people bind one end of the float with the line with a loop knot. Others bind one end of the float with a piece of string which in turn is looped with the line. What I do is a nicer method. I take a pin an inch and a half long. I first anneal it by heating, then I insert the head of the pin into the core

of the peacock's quill at one end vertically, then I bind this portion tightly with a piece of string. I then double this pin and with the aid of a pair of pincers or sometimes with my teeth press the doubled portion hard a little away from the bend. Now if a piece of line is inserted within the two portions of this doubled pin the line will be held tightly by the metal. The decided advantage of this method of fixing the float is that it can be removed and fixed very easily when desired, without injuring the line.



The other end of the float is painted with black or red oil colour half an inch apart with two or three stripes  $\frac{1}{2}$  inch wide. This is sometimes effected by whipping coloured thread around, half an inch apart.

### FIXING THE REEL.

This is generally done with a piece of string or tape, keeping the handle of the reel in such a position that it may be on the right hand side when fishing. Winch fitting is very good but expensive. I use a german-silver clamp with a screw to tighten. They can be had from

Messrs. Khan & Co., of 209, Cornwallis St., Calcutta. It is their special make. The price is only Re. 1/4/-.

The reel should be rigidly tied with the rod, in a line with the rings, for when the fish pulls the line, if the reel slips, it will very much inconvenience you.

### RINGS.

Upright snake rings or standing rings of brass, copper or german-silver wire are equally good.

These should be whipped with the rod in one line, about  $1\frac{1}{2}$  feet from the butt-end, at a distance of a foot or thereabout. I would like to have the topmost ring to be a snake ring. This won't foul the line at the tip of the rod and will not give trouble when the fish is hooked.



Snake ring.

## THE FISHING PLACE.

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SOMETIME much depends on the selection of the fishing spot. Big fish do not generally come to a spot where the water is very shallow, and if they do they are easily and sooner scared.

It is very inconvenient to have the sun shining on your face when fishing as it sometimes means good 5 or 6 hours' patient waiting. If you are fishing in the morning select a spot on the east bank and if in the afternoon on the west bank of the tank. You should select a spot where there is about 5 or 6 feet of water at the tip of your rod, *i.e.*, about 10 or 12 feet from the edge of the water. If the water of the tank is very clear you should prefer a spot which has some weeds extending out from the bank into the water for about 2 or 3 feet. If they are superficial weeds, so much the better. If the weeds extend to any distance along the shore it is a good plan to clear them away a little distance from where you fish, as otherwise there will be the likelihood of fouling the line with them when playing the fish or trying to land. But you must make sure that

the bottom of the tank just where you will lay your bait is free from weeds and has not much rotten mud or *pank*. The spot should be examined, whenever possible, on the day before you actually go out for fishing. Get the bottom of the tank cleaned, by a diver, of all weeds and rotten mud, so that the place is level and clear of all weeds. This can be conveniently done by making the man, who will clear the bottom of the tank, fix a piece of bamboo at the centre of spot where you intend baiting. While under water he can easily hold this bamboo with his left hand and clear the bottom with his right. The spot selected should be flat and level. Slopes are unfavourable as when you throw the balls of ground-bait they will run down the slope. Whenever possible bait the spot for two or three days morning and afternoon.

Many people have come to grief by paying no attention to these details of selection of the place for fishing and clearing of the bottom of the tank. Where you cannot get to a depth of 5 feet of water at a distance of say 12 feet from the edge of the water, it is best to erect a *machan* or platform or you will have to depend upon *jhima* fishing which is the proper method for fishing in shallow-water tanks. This will be

explained later on. Some tanks are so very weedy that it is very difficult to have the bottom properly cleaned by an ordinary cooly. For these tanks I recommend the following procedure. When you know the tank is such, take with you a piece of zinc or iron sheet or a bamboo mat about 1 yard square. Tie firmly two pieces of bricks at each corner. Let this be planted at the spot, where you intend fishing, firmly by pressing with a bamboo. Any ordinary cooly will easily do this. On this you throw your ground-bait or *char*.

In tanks where the bottom is full of *pank* or stones or broken bricks, I have seen in Orissa they make a false bottom by dumping 4 or 5 basketsful of sand at the spot the bait is thrown.

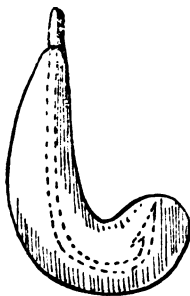
### STAY OR SUPPORT.

The tip of the rod should be kept at least a foot or so above the surface of the water; for this a bi-forked piece of wood or bamboo should be pushed into to the bottom of the tank about 3 or 4 feet from the place where you sit.

## BAITS.

DIFFERENT people use different baits for the hook, according to individual fancy, but those that are generally used I note below.

*Wheat flour paste* or loaf paste made by kneading it in water. It should only be moderately soft. Some people prefer adding *ghee* or a little rotten cheese to it. The proper method of fixing it on the hook is shown in the illustration. The dotted lines indicate the hook; the hook should be completely covered up.

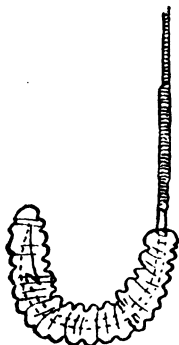


Flour bait.

## WORM BAIT.

Lob worms, which are generally known by the name of *dudhia kechua* on account of their fair colour, are the best worm baits. *Labeos* seem to have little liking for the black variety. Fix a worm in the form of a spiral as shown. If one is small use two. The hook should be concealed. *Dudhia kechuas* can be easily had near ash or refuse pits in villages or where cow dung is stored

for manure. They are also had in gardens about a foot below the surface of the earth. They are plenty during the rains.



Worm bait.

*Red Ant's Eggs.*—Red ants form a sort of nest on mango trees at the ends of twigs and present the appearance of something covered up by the leaves. These when pierced with a stick will drop down a large number of eggs small and white. The eggs should be caught in a basket or a piece

of cloth, as it is difficult to pick them up from the ground. These are kneaded with a piece of loaf and make a good bait.

The larvæ of wasps also make good bait for the hook and should be procured whenever available.

*Boiled rice* well kneaded with *fried khulee* (mustard cakes) finely ground, also make a good bait. *Shrimps* cleared of their scales are very often used in Calcutta as a good bait.

Live fish or cockroaches are no good for the *Rohu*, *Mirgal* or *Kutla*. They are only suited for *Boali* or *Moya* (*Chitals*) and such like fish. For these, hook number 16 to 20 should be used, as they have very sharp teeth.

## GROUND BAITS OR CHAR.

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FOR this different people have different ideas. Some are for sweet scented *chars* (or ground baits) some for rotten. Some use both at the same time.

The commonest ground bait is fried or partially burnt *khulee* or mustard oil-cakes. Some anglers powder them and mix with earth (*chikna matti*) of equal quantity, and make the mixture into balls with the addition of a little water. These are thrown in at the spot you wish to fish. Others throw them in lump, but the former method is more general. Sandy earth is unsuitable for the purposes of *char* (ground bait).

With fried *khulee* spices are added ; *Methi*, *Ekangi*, *Kala Jira* and *Ghore Botch* and *Tambul*. These can be had from any common *baniya*. A pice worth of each is quite sufficient. The spices are first fried and then pounded and mixed with earth. Some prefer adding boiled rice to this. The above are all sweet-smelling *chars*.

For rotten *chars*, I may say, all sorts of things are used. Rotten cheese mixed with earth is very often used in Calcutta, it being easily available.

Another method is to keep, *khulee*, boiled rice, a little curd (*dahi*) or butter milk left fermenting for about a week with the addition of a little water. This is also mixed with earth and thrown in balls.

Rotten shrimps, rotten potatoes, rotten earthworms, etc., are also used.

In Behar *Mahua* after distillation of country spirit is used as a *char*. A handful of this is thrown at the fishing spot. The dregs of wine after distillation of country spirit is also used in Bengal and is sometimes highly spoken of.

To me it appears, for the purposes of a *char* half a seer of fried *khulee*, pounded and mixed with equal part of *chikna matti* made into balls, is quite good for one rod for a day's fishing. The addition of spices make the thing a little more fine. Beyond these mentioned above nothing more is necessary than rotten cheese when available. To these the addition of boiled rice improves the *char* a little. Asafoetida is also mixed with mud and is thrown as a *char*. Oil turpentine, onions and garlic are also used.

Some people roast a piece of brick with dregs of *ghee* and add *asafoetida* to it. This they throw at the *char*. This leaves the fish attracted, greedy, as they cannot eat it, and in search of food ; so they easily take bait.

I dislike the use of rotten and filthy bait. The common belief is that it does not attract the *Rohus*. *Mirgals* are more partial to this class of bait, but there is the possibility of attracting turtles and the *Boali* fish, which no angler desires to hook. The rotten *chars* are only used by non-sportsmen.

### THROW BAIT.

The ground bait is supplemented by throw baits, etc., for the fish, in order to keep them moving about. For this rice-polishings (*chāūl kā kurā*) is used and is sometimes roasted. This is moistened with the addition of water and is thrown occasionally, not when you know the fish is near the bait or nibbling. Throw a little of it after each "strike." Half a seer is quite enough for a day's fishing. *Kutlas* are very much attracted by *chāūl kā kurā*. Keep on baiting when you know *Kutlas* abound in the tank. 'But *ka sattu*' or powder of fried gram is also used for this purpose. Throw only as much as you raise with the fingers at a time.

## FISHING.

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BEFORE casting the line, the depth of the water should be ascertained; for this you can fix one of the balls of *char* on the hooks, or you can use any weight, say a ball of clay, and drop it at the spot baited. If now the float goes below the surface of the water, it should be raised further up the line till only half of it is submerged and stands erect and *vice versâ*. Now bait the hooks properly and cast at the spot thus plumbed. Keep the rod on the rest; do not have more than 2 to 3 feet of line between the tip of your rod and the float. Now, wait patiently till the float moves. If it is fish of any consequence the float will dip after a few successive trembles. This is just the time to strike. Sometimes erect floats after a few nibbles float up and lie flat on the surface of water; this is also an indication to strike. As the nibbling and dipping or otherwise is finished in a second or two one should be always on the alert. When striking, one hand should hold the butt and the other should grip the rod outside the reel *holding the line and rod*

*in your palm tightly.* The strike should be *straight up and sharp, without raising the elbow,* or it will be too strong and will snap the line. Some strike to the right or left, but I prefer a straight up strike. This is most effective.

As you gather experience, from the nature of the bites you will know whether it is a small fish or otherwise. The small ones simply worry the bait; there is no continuity in their bites, whereas the nibble of a carp is more decisive and business-like.

The *Mirgal* is slower in its nibbling than the *Rohu*. When it takes the bait it sucks it gently causing the float to tremble. Then suddenly the float goes down indicating that the fish is taking the bait in its mouth. Then is the time to strike. The *Mirgal* is only a little slower and is sometimes mistaken for a small fish from the method of taking the bait. The bite of a *Rohu* is sometimes a very quick succession of nibbles and then the float goes down. The nibbling of the *Rewa* comes in very quick succession and the float seldom goes down beyond pressing the float down a little, and it is by pulling at about the beginning of the downward press of the float that you can hook him. But you will seldom find him bigger than half a pound or so. The

commonest belief is that the *Kutla* does not nibble at the bait, although I have seen many *Kutlas* hooked in the mouth; they go in search of food and as its mouth is very large somehow or other, when it is drawing water by the mouth, the bait enters its mouth. The *Kutla* never nibbles. Suddenly and without any warning the float goes down. If you can strike *just as the float is going down* you may hook or else the next moment the bait will come out of its wide mouth. It is easier to hook him in the body; I explain later on the special methods of fishing a *Kutla*.

The method of fishing described in this chapter is the ordinary method. If you want to bag *Kutla* in this way you should fix the float say 2 feet above the actual depth of water at the fishing spot, so that when you cast the line the float will lie flat on the surface of the water. Now by winding up the reel slowly keeping the rod on the rest, you can make the float stand erect. Now your line under the surface will lie inclined towards you. As the line is taut, *Kutlas* with their big body when moving about are sure to press on the line, and as the float goes down now strike sharp straight up. But for this three hooks are recommended. The upper two

will be baited while the last one will be left without bait. The *Kutlas* will go about if they have come, when you throw *kurah* (rice-polishings). You can know of their presence in the *char* sometimes from a circular motion of water on the *char*. As carps are all bottom feeders, this method of fishing does not stand in the way of the *Mirgal* or *Rohus* taking bait, whereas it is good for the *Kutlas* as well. When I am ordinarily fishing I prefer to fish according to this.

## PLAYING THE FISH.

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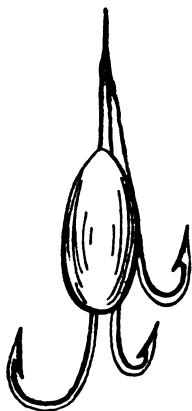
Do not let the fish run with the line just as you hook him but wait till he strains the line. With the line running slack there is every likelihood of unhooking the fish if he takes a turn. The palm of the hand should be kept tightly pressing the line against the rod. But do not press it too hard. Otherwise the hand will be injured and the line may snap. To prevent this a leather guard is sometimes used. It is nothing but a sewn pipe of leather so to say. As the line passes through this your palm is left uninjured. When the fish stops running, you begin to wind your line, letting it go when he draws again. During the whole operation the rod must be kept at an angle of not less than  $45^{\circ}$  to the surface of water, *never parallel*; always keep a strain on the fish. The butt should be kept pressed against your body. No effort should be made to stop the fish in the midst of its run or you will surely break the line or the hook. No effort should be made to pull the fish out of water by pulling the line with the hand. He should be taken out preferably with a landing net or by

catching him with both hands through the gill. Never be in a hurry to play out the fish, follow him as he comes and goes away. When you bring him near the edge see that your line is not caught in the weeds and do not allow any one to touch the fish till he lies on his side exhausted. While taking the hook out, let somebody hold the fish by the head or through the gills, for if he jumps, there are chances that you may hook yourself with the second hook. I have seen this sometimes happen. When the fish is a small one and it cannot run with the line wind the reel and pull him out by force.

## JHIMA FISHING.

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THIS is a method which is more commonly found in Calcutta and its surroundings than elsewhere. It is good for shallow or gently sloping tanks where you can neither erect a *machan* to fish from, nor can conveniently get a



depth of 5 or 6 feet at the end of your rod. For this method you first pull out about 20 yards of your line from the reel. Three hooks are generally used for *jhima* fishing. You may use any bait on the hooks, mentioned for ordinary fishing and should similarly ground-bait the spot where you want to fish. As you cannot

reach a good distance in the tank without using a weight at the hooks, a hard paste is necessary and is made by mixing finely powdered roasted *khulee* with boiled rice or thrashed rice (*chewra*). Rice polishings are added to make it more

adhesive. This paste is fixed on the mounting line of the third or last hook as shown. The paste, not larger than a billiard ball in size, is used. This is called *mukh char*. You must have a sufficient quantity of *mukh char* for the day's fishing, for each time you cast the line you use so much of the *mukh char*. First, the line pulled out of the reel is kept well arranged so that it may not get fouled and there should be no obstacles in the way of the line when you are throwing it out. The line should be cast by swinging the baited hooks. After a little practice one can cast at the right spot every time. Now after allowing the bait to settle at the bottom of the tank, and placing the rod on the rest, tighten the line gently by winding the reel. Floats are not generally used for this method of fishing, but you may fix a float anywhere say 5 or 6 yards away from the tip of your rod. When you use a float strain the line only sufficiently to keep the float erect, otherwise keep the line taut. When you don't use a float you have to watch the line on the tip of your rod. When you find a dragging (continuous) pull at the line after a few jerks, you should strike. The *jhima* method of fishing should be resorted to only in shallow-watered tanks.

## HAT SUTA.

This is only a modification or rather a crude device of *jhima* fishing and it is only good for shallow tanks. The arrange-



ment is simply a piece of line wound on a bobbin. In short, it is simply line fishing. A lead weight of the size of a bullet is used to assist in throwing out the line. The line is tightened by keeping it fixed on a piece of stick, the upper end of which is split into two up to certain length, stuck in the ground, as shown. Here, as the fish tries to go off with the bait it hooks itself on account of the lead weight. The lead weight is fixed to the line little below the hooks at the extreme end of the line. The fish is played by holding the line between fingers. The line where you hold it between the fingers should

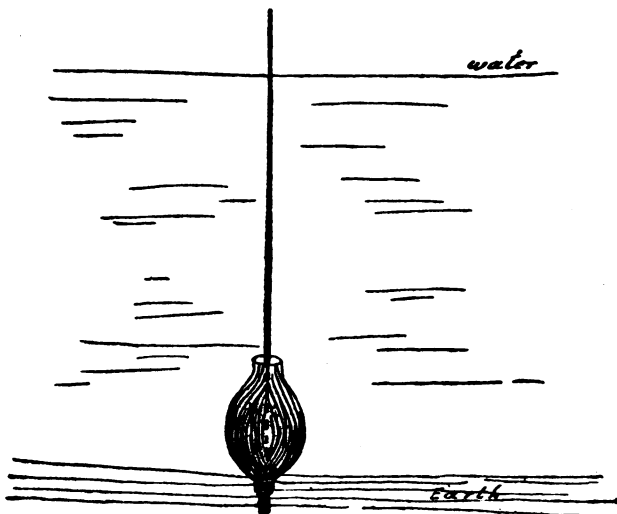
not be kept more than a foot above the surface of the water. Any bait is used on the *hat suta*, but worms are preferred. The line used for *hat suta* is generally thicker than is used on a reel.

### THE ARAH FISHING.

This is the most rational method of fishing. Especially *Kutla* and all sorts of carp can be caught by this method. My biggest catch *Kutla* (about 50lbs. in weight) was bagged with the help of an *arah*. The method is very good where you can get a depth of say 5 to 6 feet of water at the end of your rod. For this you have to make the *arah*, which is simply a piece of bamboo with only a joint at one end. Female bamboos (*talda*), about an inch and a quarter thick, is required. This is first split lengthwise into sections of not more than  $\frac{1}{8}$ " wide nearly up to the joint, taking care that the joint does not burst. Then the inner portion of the strips are cleared with a knife so that they are quite pliant and limp. The *arah* then presents the appearance shown in the illustration. The joint is bored through, say to nearly about the size of an



inch, to permit of a thin rod to pass through it. The *arah* should be stuffed with the paste or *mukh char*, described before, of the size of two or three cricket balls. In stuffing, care should be taken that no crevice is left in which the hooks may be caught. The stuffed



*arah* presents the appearance of a small cocoon, when the split end is bound with a piece of cord. Now a thin rod, preferably of split bamboo about 7 feet in length, is passed right through the *arah* which is brought very close to its butt. The split end of the *arah*, as well as the

jointed end, are tightly bound with pieces of cord. The split end of the *arah* should be kept nearest to the bottom of the tank. The extreme end of the butt of the *arah*-rod is pointed a little. This is fixed on the bottom of the tank *quite perpendicular*, within the reach of the tip of the (angling) rod. The bottom of the tank should be cleaned as advised before. While fixing the rod on the ground care should be taken that a portion of the stuffed *arah* gets into the ground as shown in the cut. It should be fixed rigidly so that a fish nibbling does not uproot it. About 6 inches of the rod planted, should be above the surface of water to indicate by its movement that a fish is nibbling. Now you watch till it moves.

One particular point that must be remembered in *arah* fishing is that you must fix the float on the line so that your hooks are say 1 inch above the bottom of the tank while lying by the side of the *arah*. For this you should measure the depth accurately and move the float till only  $\frac{1}{4}$ " of it stands erect out of water.

The hooks to be used are *Kutla*-killers and only two of them are enough. When the *arah*-rod is moving (which will move at intervals only), you know that a fish is investigating; you must first observe from which side the fish is nibbling,

then quietly let go the line on that side as close to the *arah*-rod as possible. Now when the float is drawn down a little strike straight up and you are sure to hook him. Do not strike when the float is moving only. You know then that a fish is moving about and consequently the movement of the water below is causing this motion to line which is being communicated to the float. If, however, you strike *aslant* to one side there is the danger of hooking the *arah* itself. *In arah fishing bare hooks are used without any bait.* If your hooks are close to the *arah* you may be sure of hooking the fish close to the mouth. The *arah* should not be fixed beyond the reach of your rod. After hooking the fish never slacken your line or permit him to run till he does so straining the line. Some bait their hooks, with the same paste used for stuffing the *arah*, as the chances are that the fish may sometimes nibble at the baited hook itself. The paste for the *arah* is to be very well kneaded to make the ingredients look one homogeneous mass. Dregs of *ghee* or '*ghee ka gad*' and rotten cheese are sometimes added to the paste, but I for one never found any very particular necessity for it. The pin-headed floats described before are very suitable for *arah* fishing as after every

strike it is often necessary to readjust the float.

It is only small fish that continually shake the *arah*. Big carp will seldom do so. After a few gentle shakes it stops and then shakes again. The line should be cast not when the *arah* is moving but when it has just stopped. It should be cast quite perpendicularly, and on the side the fish is attacking. Now if the fish nibbles from the other side, you need not take out the line, but simply raising it a little can easily put it on that side. But this should not be done in quick succession; for if the fish is a shy one it may be scared away.

### THE CHAR-KATHI.

The *arah* is an improvement of the old *chār-kāthi* method. This arrangement consists of a thin bamboo rod about the middle of which a large number of coarse earth-worms (the black thick variety) sufficient to make the size of a cricket ball is tied up with a large piece of string. One end of the string is first tied to the middle of the rod. Then the earth-worms are held in the palm of one hand in a bundle and the portion of the rod where the string is bound is laid across the mass of earth-

worms. The rod is then turned round and round till all the earth-worms are tightly bound up by the string with the rod and present the shape of a ball. The other free end of the string is then bound up with the rod. It is then planted upright on the bottom of the tank where you will fish, so that about a foot of the rod is above the surface of water. You must first measure the actual depth at which this ball of earth-worms stands and adjust your float accordingly. For this the hooks are baited with *dudhia-kechua* or lob-worms, and are laid quite close to the *chār-kāthi*. This is more often resorted to in muddy streams rather than in tanks.

### GENERAL INSTRUCTIONS.

The fish should not be played in the *char* but away from it as others will be scared away.

If you erect a *machan* it should not be shaky. as this will frighten the fish away.

No noise should be made when you are fishing.

Dull-coloured wearing apparel such as 'Khaki' should preferably be used instead of shining white. The shadow reflected scares the fish.

One should not stand up too often while fishing, specially where the water is very clear.

All loud talking should be avoided.

Rubber soled shoes are good for fishing, as they don't slip and make no noise when moving about.

Be always on the alert specially when you know from the collection of bubbles sent up that a fish is near about and feeding.

Do not be in a hurry to strike in the middle of the nibble, but wait *till the float is going down*, and just when it is submerged.

### SEASONS AND HOUR FOR FISHING.

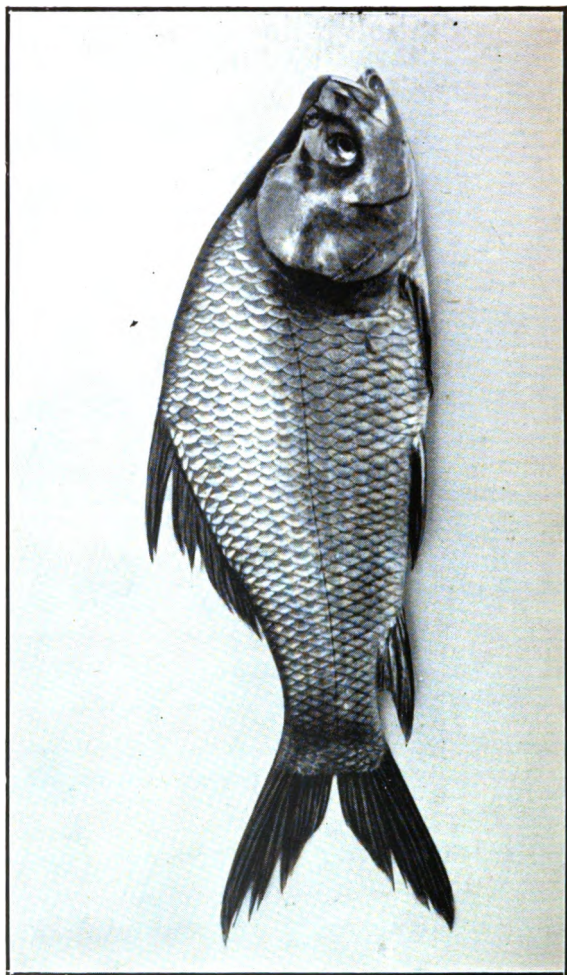
Although I have seen fish taking bait almost throughout the year, yet I must confess that it holds good for tanks well stocked only. But this is certain that even there you will find a carp bite less during the winter than during the rains. You may commence fishing after a first few showers of rain during the summer. The height of the season is during the rains till about the end of September or middle of October.

Windy days are not favourable to fishing. Slight drizzling showers with intervals of sunshine are regarded to be most favourable for this purpose.

There are no specially suitable hours for fishing. In fact I have fished at all hours of the day and up to midnight. Some people are very fond of watching the float as the day wanes and

darkness approaches. I don't find any special reason for this except a plea for waiting till they can no longer see the float without the help of a lamp. Fishing during the night is favourable for catching big ones, as then the noise of the day ceases and owing to the darkness around the fish are less easily scared and silently approach. Night fishing is more comfortable and suited to tanks that have been overfished. A Deitz lamp with a dark paper cover to shut the light from the eyes, I have found sometimes quite enough for night angling but acetylene cycle lamps are much better.





CATLA.—(*Catla Buchanani*.)

## THE INDIAN CARP AND ITS HABIT.

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### KUTLAH.

SCIENTIFIC name :—*Kutlah Buchanani*.

In Behar it is known as "*Bhakura*." It attains according to Day, "to at least 6 ft. in length," although I have never seen it so long. It does not grow so much in length as the *Rohi* or the *Mirgal* as in bulk. I have seen one hooked which was very nearly a maund in weight, but was not more than a little over 4 feet in length. It is very much broader than its cousins and has a large mouth. It is as good eating as the "*Rohi*."

It seldom takes bait freely as the "*Rohi*," *Mirgal* or *Calbose*. Some are inclined to believe that it never takes bait, but when drawing water with its mouth the bait is drawn in and so some are found to be hooked in the mouth. At least I have never known it take lob-worm bait. The easiest way to catch it is with the help of the "*arah*" and to foul hook it in the body when it presses against the line.

The "*Kutlah*" is greyish above graduating to silvery on the sides, with dark coloured fins, in some specimens nearly black.

It gives good play like the *Rohi* when hooked, but does not leap out of water. It goes off even faster than the *Rohi* but is not as persistent.

It is found almost throughout India, Burma, and Siam, excepting Central India.

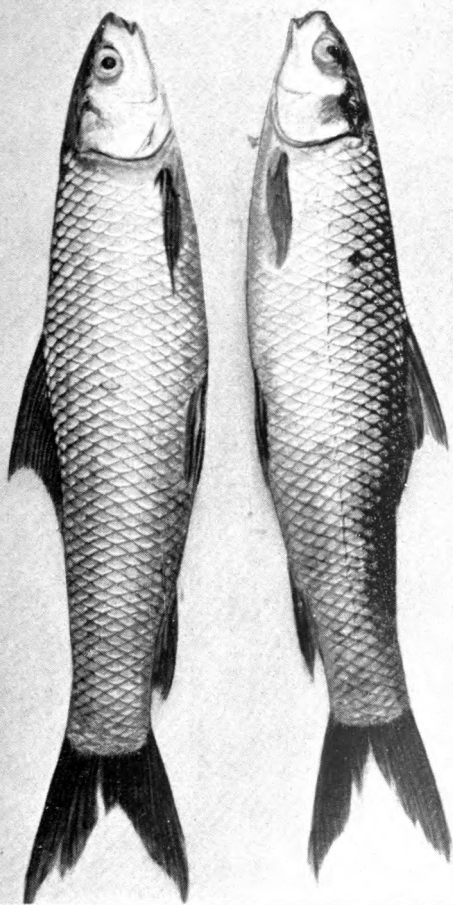
### MIRGAL.

Scientific name:—*Cirrhina mirgala*.

Bengalee:—*Mirgal*. Hindi:—*Nainee*.

In colour it is silvery grey with dark grey markings along the back. Sometimes having a copper tinge. The pectoral, ventral and anal fins, orange stained with black: eyes golden.

This fish too is good eating. Its head is smaller than that of the *Rohi* and not so broad. It freely takes any bait but is believed to prefer worm bait and to be attracted by rotten "*Chars*." It grows longer in size than the *Kutlah*, often to about 5 feet. The *Mirgal* fights very well and persistently though it never leaps out of water nor rushes off like the *Rohi*. When a big sized *Mirgal* is hooked it will sometimes sulk at the bottom of the tank, defying all efforts to pull



MIRGAL. — (*Cirrhina Mirgala.*)







ROHU.—(*Labeo Rohita*.)

out, until it is prodded with a long pole or disturbed somehow. The crushing power of the *Mirgal's* lips is believed to be greater than that of the *Rohi* and good hooks are said to have yielded to its pressure or twist. The *Mirgal* is slower in taking the bait than the *Rohi* and is said to be more cautious than its cousins.

The bubbles sent up by a *Mirgal* are more numerous and smaller in size than that of the *Rohi*, by which may be known which of the fish is near about the *Char*.

The *Mirgal* is found in all rivers and tanks of Bengal, Behar, Orissa, Deccan, N.-W. Provinces, Punjab, Sind, Cutch and Burma.

### ROHI OR ROHU.

Scientific name :—*Labeo rohita*.

Bengalee :—*Rooee*. Hindi :—*Rohu*. Punjabee :—*Koopoo*.

*Colour* :—Bluish shading to brownish along the back becoming silvery on the sides and beneath. Sometimes there is a red mark on the scales. The fins are reddish and in some specimens black.

It runs to a large size about 5 ft. in length and to over a maund in weight. It is an excellent eating fish and has fewer bones in it than its distant relations.

It is known as the king of labeos as it fights very well, persistently and doggedly when hooked. It gives sharp jerks occasionally and leaps clear out of water. It is just then when the line yields and so the sportsman has to be on the alert.

The bite of a *Rohi* is very decisive and after 3 or 4 trembling the float goes down. The *Rohi* takes the *atta* or lob-worm bait equally well, though it is said to have a preference for wasps larvæ.

The *Rohi* sends up one big bubble and sometimes two at a time.

It is to be found throughout Bengal, Behar, Orissa, Sind, Punjab and Assam to Burma. It is not found in Madras or Western Coast.

### THE CALBOSE.

Scientific name:—*Labeo calbasu*.

Bengalee:—*Calbose*. Hindi:—*Kalbanse*.

The *Calbose* does not probably grow to more than 3 feet in length and 20lbs. or so in weight. In growth it is slower than its cousins.

*Colour*:—Black shading to slaty-black. Sometimes in examples from clear streams, many of the scales have a scarlet centre. Fins black, occasionally the end of the upper lobe of the caudal white. "In some districts adults have very



CALBASU.—(*Labeo Calbasu.*)



elongated fins, the first few dorsal rays reach even to the base of the caudal, the ventral extends even to the base of the anal when laid flat, reaches the middle of the caudal."

When taking the bait the bite of a *Calbasu* is more of the nature of the *Mirgal*. The number of nibbles is greater than that of the *Rohi*. When hooked it gives even better play than the *Rohi* of the same size. It is very persistent and dogged in its fighting. It has a smaller mouth than the *Rohi* and has four distinct barbels.

It is found in the Punjab, Sind, Cutch, Deccan, Southern India, Malabar, and throughout Bengal, Behar and Orissa, and Assam.

## THE PREDACEOUS FISH.

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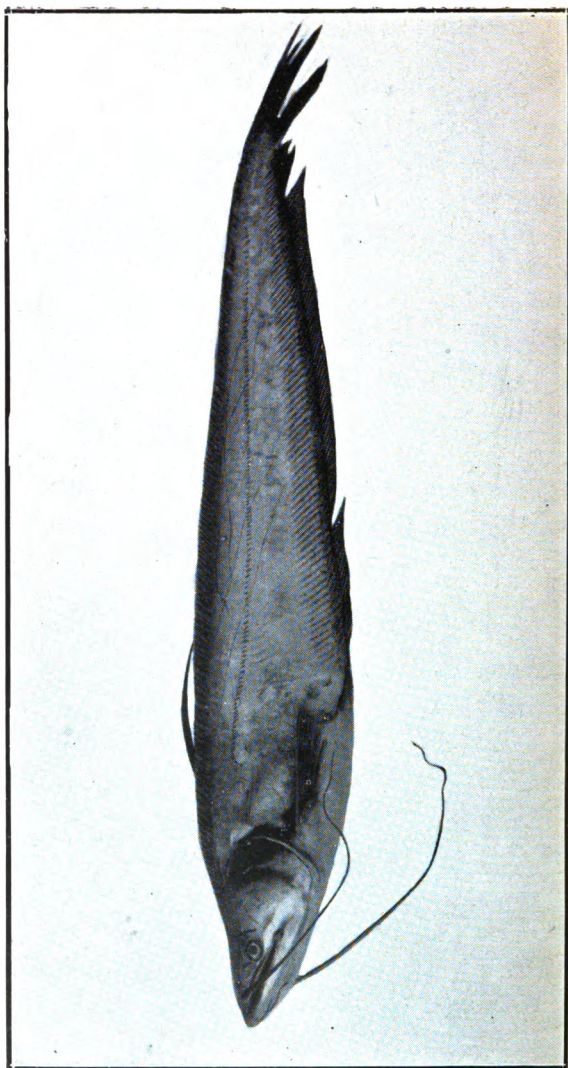
I SHOULD not close this book without a few words on the predaceous fish which are so often met with in tanks. Though they do not give such good play as the *Rohu*, *Kutlah*, *Mirgal* or the *Calbose*, yet on account of their big size some anglers fancy catching them.

The *Bawali*, *Chital*, *Soal* and *Sal* are commonly found in tanks and they are considered a pest as they live upon the small fish and eat the fry of other good fish.

The only way to catch them is with a live or moving bait, by spinning, as in *Mahseer* fishing, and sometimes by allowing the live bait to play near where the fish is showing its appearance, at a depth of 3 or 4 feet below the surface of water or in shallow weedy corners of tanks. They may also be caught with a spoon or phantom.

As these predaceous fish have very fine teeth only quite large sized hooks (like No. 9 or 10 Limerick hooks) should be used, and if a live fish or frog bait is used the hook should be pierced through the backbone.





BAWALLI.—(*Wallago attu*.)

The predaceous fish can also be hooked with the following device. To a thick bamboo rod about 8 or 9 feet in length, the tip of it being about  $\frac{1}{4}$ " thick, is tied a piece of thick strong line about 5 or 6 feet in length. A fine log line answers the purpose well. A big sized hook is tied to it. The rod is fixed to the ground rigidly, at an angle of say 45 degrees to the surface of the water. The live bait is pierced through the back and is allowed just to touch the surface of the water so that it can only move about on the surface. The fish in coming to swallow the bait hooks itself. For this a quiet corner of the tank is selected and the bait is generally laid in the night. This is known as the *Jeyana*. The *Koi* and the *Lata* fish are generally used in Bengal for bait as they survive a long time. Small frogs and cockroaches are also used for this purpose.

### THE BAWALI.

Scientific name :—*Wallago attu*.

The *Bawali* is known as the fresh water shark and by the name of *Gwalli*, *Malli*, *Laki*, etc. It grows to a length of about 6 feet and to more than a maund in weight. "The body is long and compressed from side to side and has no scales. The head is big and compressed from

above downwards. Cleft of the mouth extending to behind the eyes. Colour uniform silvery. It is a long flat fish, with a big head and a mouth full of teeth."

It is found throughout Bengal, Behar, Orissa, Assam, and Punjab.

### THE CHITAL.

Scientific name :—*Notopterus chitala*.

Hindi :—*Moya*. Sind :—*Ganadam*. Bengalee :—*Chital*.

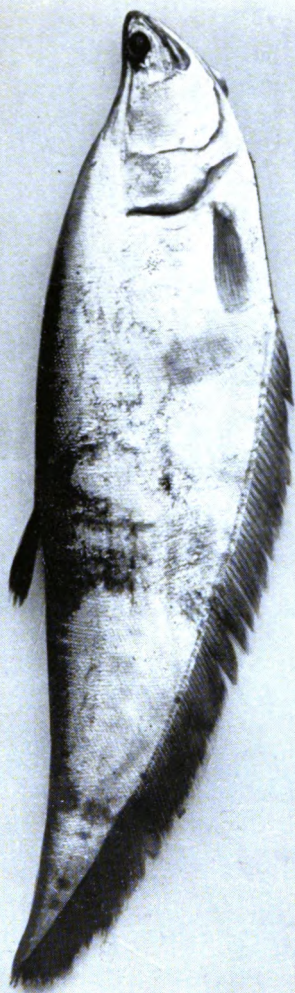
The Chital grows to about 6 feet in length and more than a maund in weight. "The maxilla extends far beyond the age of the orbit. In colour the back is coppery with silver bars, sides silvery." It is a long narrow fish with a small head. It is full of bones but is good eating. It does not give good play.

### THE MARRAL.

Scientific name :—*O. Marulius*.

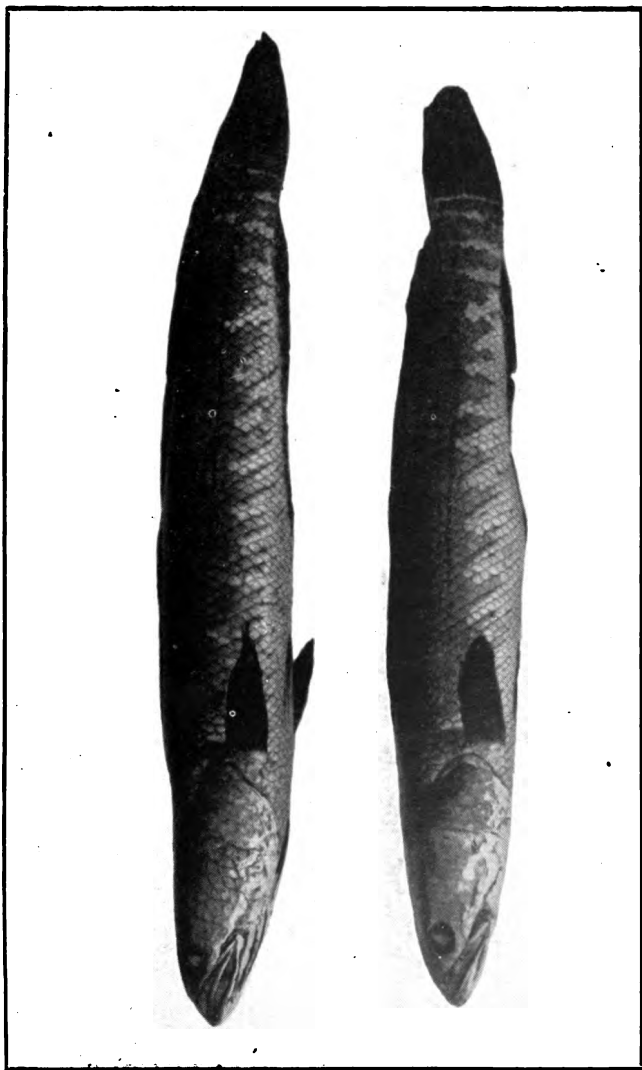
Bengalee :—*Sol*. Hindi :—*Sowl* or *Souri*. Punjabee :—*Sowl*.

The *Marral* grows to about 4 feet in size. The general colour is dark grey, with streaks of brown at the sides. Those with greenish blotches on back, reddish blotches on belly, white spot on



CHITAL.—(*Netopterus Chitala*.)





THE MARRAL.—(*O. Marulius*.)



scales, and eye-like spot on tail, are known by the name of *Sal*. It is like pike from a sporting point of view.

It is found throughout India, Burma and Ceylon.

## IS THE CARP DRAWN TO THE BAIT BY SIGHT OR SMELL.

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IN the chapter on ground baits though I have given recipes of different sorts and recommended their use, I must confess I have great doubts whether fish are attracted by smell. According to a German scientist the carp has no nose and is short-sighted. I am rather inclined to believe that even if it had the sense of smell it could hardly scent any bait in water from a distance. The fish I think is drawn to the bait by its sight. I do not think it is short-sighted at all, as the same scientist thinks, as the merest shadow of anything from a distance scares them. Whether the carp is drawn to food by sight or smell, I think is a problem for scientists to solve. I am trying to find a solution at present by using odourless white bait and shall be glad to record my experience on some future date.

Should any of my readers feel interested enough in regard to tank angling, to desire to ask me any question bearing on the subject, I shall be glad to reply to the best of my ability.

Letters addressed to me c/o the Publishers of this little work will be duly forwarded.







# TANK ANGLING



BHATTACHARYA







